EML Accent

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Mansfield University
English & Modern Languages Newsletter

Ponte Positiva

—Krista Hutcherson

The best advice that I received about studying abroad came from a complete stranger. Right until the day before I was ready to leave, I was the epitome of excited. After passing through airport security, I became terrified. It was my first time flying, my first time traveling outside of the country, and my first time being away from everything that I completely understood. I was sitting on the plane that would take me from the United States to the Dominican Republic. I had no intention of speaking, just shutting my eyes and hoping that my fear of heights wouldn't throw me into a panic attack. But then, the woman sitting next to me touched my hand.

"*¿Estas nerviosa*?"

I looked at her and all of the Spanish that I had learned vanished from my mind. Her 8-year-old son, who was sitting on the opposite end of the row, looked at me and smiled. He repeated his mother's question and after a moment I confessed that yes, I was nervous. The woman introduced herself as Sra. Espino and told me that she and her son were Dominican. They were returning to their home after visiting family in Florida. They both only spoke Spanish.

Sra. Espino and her son were more than happy to talk to me about their country and their personal lives I barely noticed when the plane left the runway, or when it landed. They walked me through customs, through the baggage claim and then to the exit, where both of them kissed me on the cheek before Sra. Espino told me…

"*Ponte positiva*." and disappeared.

I have always had a passion for Spanish and for the Dominican Republic, but since speaking to Sra. Espino, I have fallen in love with this country. The differences between here and the U.S. are endless. In the

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Students Present at Frederick Douglass Conference

Three EML students traveled to Bloomsburg University last April to present papers at the 10th Annual Frederick Douglass Undergraduate Interdisciplinary Conference.

Spanish majors Erica Martin and Rosie Lammey presented on the Cultural Intersections panel. Erica's paper was titled "The Ethics of the Translator: An Analysis of Gregory Rabassa's Translation of Luisa Valenzuela's Novel *Cola de Lagartija*," and Rosie's paper was "Establishing an Identity: The Individual, Socio-Economic, and Historical-Political Self in *The Book of Memories* by Ana Maria Shua."

English major, Emily Rose Cole, presented her paper, "'You Nothing but Trash': Dorothy Allison's Literary Defense of White Trash Children," on the Literature and Social Responsibility panel, which was chaired by Dr. Lynn Pifer.

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Please, send news, announcements, and contributions to: ksanner@mansfield.edu

Student and Alumni News

Marissa Scott, who graduated with a BA in English in Spring 2010, completed her Honors thesis under the mentorship of Dr. Linda Rashidi. Scott dove into the works of the seminal Senegalese writer and filmmaker, Ousmane Sembène, often dubbed "The Father of African Cinema." Her thesis was entitled "The Changing Social Dynamism of Senegalese Women in the Films of Ousmane Sembène." For her Honors presentation, Scott screened the film *Faat Kiné* at the Palace Theatre in Corning, NY. Scott introduced both the film and its producer Ousmane Sembène for the audience; after the film she answered questions and lead a discussion of this socially-conscious comedy. Scott also introduced Dr. Rashidi's class in African Literature to the work of Sembène, showing his last film, *Moolaadé*, and leading a discussion. Marissa Scott first explored the work of Sembène in Rashidi's African Literature class (ENG 3305) in the Spring of 2009; her final project for that course was an analysis of *La Noire de . . . [Black Girl]*, one of Sembène's earlier works. Marissa is now pursuing graduate studies at SUNY Brockport.

From the Chair's Corner

—Dr. John Ulrich

An upcoming undergraduate English major conference has announced that they are now accepting submissions. I strongly encourage you to consider submitting your work this conference. This is a great way to meet English majors from other universities, to get your work heard & get some feedback from your peers, and to gain experience presenting your work in a professional academic setting. It's also a good cv-builder ("cv" stands for "curriculum vitae," the term we use in the academic world for a "resume.") See page 3 for a summary of the conference. If you haven't presented a paper at a conference before, you might like to read my "Chair's Corner" column from our Fall 2008 issue of our department newsletter; just scroll down to the second page using this link: http://coursework.mnsfld.edu/eml/Accent-VOL3.pdf

Q & A with Dr. Gwendolyn Blume

Dr. Blume joined the English and Modern Languages faculty this year as a tenure-track Assistant Professor in English.

Q: Tell us a bit about yourself. Where did you grow up? Where did you complete your degrees?

A: *I grew up in Starved Rock State Park in Illinois, about 100 miles south of Chicago. My father was the park superintendent, so we lived inside of the park. It was pretty idyllic – there were hiking trails and waterfalls only five minutes from my backyard. I'm proud to say that Starved Rock was the most-visited state park in Illinois. I did my undergraduate degree at the University of Iowa in Iowa City (Go Hawks!); I got a B.A. in English, Russian and Psychology. I received my M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. By that time my parents and brother had moved up to Wausau, Wisconsin, so I consider myself a Wisconsinite (and I've been told I have the accent to prove it).*

Q: What field do you consider your specialty?

A: *I wrote my dissertation on the 19th-c. British reader, and my main interests are the 18th- and 19th-c. European novel and the field of book history.*

Q: If I were to enroll in one of your literature courses, what could I expect? What is your primary aim or goal?

A: *My primary goal is to make sure that all of my students feel like they've gained a foothold in reading and understanding literature; I think that literature has been mystified in a way that does a disservice to readers and reading, and I don't want my students to feel like any material is too difficult for them.*

Q: Some of our English majors hope to continue on to graduate school. What advice would you give them, having recently completed the full process yourself?

A: *I think that one of the main challenges of graduate school is the fact that most people who enroll in grad school have perfectionist tendencies and often prefer the product to the process. My advice to students beginning their grad school careers would be to overcome their perfectionism early! I also think that what helped me to survive*

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Ponte Positiva

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United States, you can't walk down a street, hear *merengue* blaring from car speakers, and watch total strangers grab each other to dance until the music fades. You don't wake up to roosters crowing in your backyard every morning unless you live on a farm. You don't hear street vendors rolling their wooden wheelbarrows through apartment complexes shouting about how fresh their *platanos* and *aguacate* are.

But then again, in the U.S., you won't nearly trip over the homeless man who sleeps outside of your condominium. You won't see naked babies playing in alleys, nor read racist messages such as "*No haitianos*" scribbled on walls by people who may or may not have completed more than 2 ½ hours a day of the country's public education system—a system considered second to worst in all of Latin America. You won't see the floating film of plastic bottles and containers instead of the Caribbean Sea.

Many of the students who came to this country with me spend the majority of their time focusing on the things that they hate about this country, marking down the days that they have left to return to what they know and love in the United States. I might have done the same thing if it hadn't been for Sra. Espino's words: "*Ponte positiva*."

A positive attitude really does make all of the difference. When I feel like being negative, I think of the opportunity that I have to learn much more Spanish than I could sitting behind a desk in a United States classroom and how much of a help it will be when I start my career as an interpreter. I thank God that I'm living in one of the safest neighborhoods in Santo Domingo, and that most Dominicans assume that I, too, am Dominican (a common belief is that all Americans are White, rich, and easy targets). I'm thankful for my Dominican friends who don't mind correcting my so-so Spanish and who have taught me how to play dominoes and to dance *bachata*; for my Dominican mom that kisses me good morning and good night, and for my sisters who make me laugh endlessly; for the most amazing, flavorful food that I have ever tasted or learned to prepare; for the chance to see how proud citizens are of their country and heritage, flaws and all. If I'm focusing on all of that, I never have time to pay attention to the negative, do I?

The things about this country that I have grown to know and love are the things that I will hate to leave in December. I am a New Jersey native that feels more comfortable living here than at home. That must have been obvious to Sra. Espino when I called her to thank her for everything. Right before we hung up, she called my name. "¿Ves? *Ya eres dominicana.*"

Sabbatical News

Both **Dr. Bruce Barton** and **Dr. Ed Washington** were granted sabbaticals this semester. **Dr. Barton** has used his break from teaching to complete two novellas, "Tiresias's Last Dream" and "Epiphany," and is currently working on a novel. **Dr. Washington's** sabbatical research involves work on the theoretical introduction to his book project on Shakespeare's black characters titled, *Beyond Cultural Stereotypes*. He is currently researching Shakespeare's *Tempest* as a model text to illustrate theoretical issues of interpretation surrounding characters of color in Shakespeare's work. His immediate goal is to produce a paper from this research that he might present at a scholarly conference sometime in 2011.

EAPSU

English Association of Pennsylvania State Universities

Undergraduate Literature Conference

This year's host: Clarion University

Conference Theme: "Howling in the Age of Technology"

Conference Date: April 14-15, 2011

Deadline for Submissions: February 4, 2011

The EAPSU Undergraduate Literature Conference is held every April at a PA state system university. We take MU students to this conference every year; the department covers your lodging (one night's stay) and registration fee and provides transportation.

Sigma Tau Delta News

Mu Xi, the Mansfield chapter of the international English honor society, Sigma Tau Delta, welcomes three new members this semester: Michael Babbish, Jael Greene, and Paul Sallemi. The society is open to English majors and minors who have completed at least three semesters of college coursework and who have at least a 3.3 QPA. Members enjoy a number of benefits, including eligibility for scholarships as well as conference and publication opportunities.

This semester members are hosting a book drive for Better World Books, a company dedicated to finding environmentally and socially responsible ways to utilize used books. If you have books of any sort that you would like to donate, please drop them in the large collection box located in Belknap's mail room.

Susquehanna University's Undergraduate Literature and Creative Writing Conference

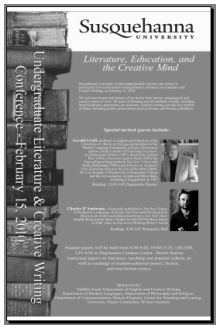
Conference Date: February 21, 2011.

Theme: "Literature and Creativity in a Digital Age"

Deadline for Submissions: November 22, 2010

Website: http://www.susqu.edu/academics/3047.asp
Click on "2011 Call for Papers" on the website above for specific instructions regarding submissions

This is an annual conference hosted by Susquehanna University in Selinsgrove, PA, less than 2 hours south of here. The organizers there always host a good conference with high-profile guest speakers. They accept both critical and creative submissions. The review process is competitive (the organizers will not accept everything), but every year we have a significant number of MU students get their submissions accepted. We have been taking students to the conference for several years; the department provides transportation (it's a one-day conference) and pays for your registration fee.


Susquehanna
UNIVERSITY
Literature, Education, and the Creative Mind
Undergraduate Literature & Creative Writing Conference - February 15, 2010

Q & A with Dr. Gwendolyn Blume

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grad school was developing a healthy emotional relationship to my dissertation and my teaching; it was hard to accept the idea that I would always have to work on my writing and teaching without ever feeling like I'd mastered it, but ultimately I believe that the opportunity to continually revise my work both as a researcher and an instructor is one of the best things about this job.

Q: What is your "key to success?" What would you tell an English major or minor, or any student, for that matter, she or he needs to do in order to get the most out of her or his education?

A: *It's important to treat your own time as valuable, and to take responsibility for your own education. I would argue that it's very rare, particularly at a university, to encounter anything that is actually a waste of time, but I think it's common to approach situations as if we can't get anything out of them. I think the more responsibility we take on for our own success, the more successful we'll be.*

Faculty News

Dr. Bruce Barton's short story, "O World Unknowable," appeared in *The View from Writers Over 50,"* edited by Vicky Lettmann and Carol Roan.

Dr. Linda Rashidi attended two conferences over the summer (2010). In May, she flew to Morocco (her first return visit since 2000) to participate in an international conference in honor of Professors Moha Ennaji and Fatima Sadiqi, linguists based at Fes University. Internationally reknown scholars in both linguistics and gender studies, this husband and wife team spent the summer of 2003 at Mansfield University. Dr. Ennaji was at MU as a Fulbright Senior Scholar, while Dr. Sadiqi taught a summer session course on Moroccan Women and Culture. **Dr. Rashidi** has co-edited a book with Dr. Sadiqi entitled *Language and Gender in Islam*, and has collaborated with both Dr. Sadiqi and Dr. Ennaji on their shared interest in the interface of language, gender, and culture. At the 2-day conference, "Gender and Interculturalism," **Dr. Rashidi** presented a paper entitled "Oral Indigenous (Feminine) Voices in a Multicultural World: Grappling with Identity in North African Literary Works." This paper, to be published in a volume from the conference, included a section on the Senagalese writer and filmmaker, Ousmane Sembène, whose work was the focus of English Major Marissa Scott's Honors Thesis. Scott's Honors Thesis is cited in Rashidi's paper.

In July, **Dr. Rashidi** attended the biennial conference of the International Lawrence Durrell Society. On Miracle Ground XVI: "Durrell and the City: Reconstructing the Urban Landscape" was held in New Orleans. Her paper "'The City Begins and Ends in Us': Durrell's City as Interior Space" has been accepted for publication in a book, edited by Donald Kaczvinsky, with the working title *Durrell and the City.*

In August, **Dr. Kristin Sanner** presented her paper, "I am afraid to own a Body--": Corporeal Independence in the Letters of Emily Dickinson and George Eliot" at the International Emily Dickinson conference at Oxford University in Oxford, England.

Dr. Sanner also had an article and two book reviews published over the summer. "Searching for Identity in *The Red Badge of Courage*: Henry Fleming's Battle with Gender" appeared in *Stephen Crane Studies* (18.1). "New York's Lascivious Nineteenth-Century Publishing Industry" a review of *Licentious Gotham: Erotic Publishing and its Prosecution in Nineteenth-Century New York* by Donna Dennis appeared in the

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From the Literary Mind

Mutations

Jorge Volpi

The panorama of the novel at the beginning of the 21st Century doesn't allow one to foretell any danger of extinction. Just the opposite, in a short time it has enjoyed a very favorable reception. Nevertheless, this vitality hides a problem: the scarce quality of the majority of the novels that are being published now-a-days. Plagues like *The Da Vinci Code* don't endanger the novel's survival as a species, rather they limit the possibility that its most daring varieties get published and reach readers. In its fight for survival, the novel has succumbed to the way of viral novels. If a writer aspires to have readers, sometimes he has no other remedy than to include elements of intrigue, history or fantasy in his story. As Roberto Bolaños wrote, we find ourselves facing the triumph of sensationalism. At the beginning, the use of the genre-novel was a breath of fresh air from the formal experimentation of the 60's, but its indiscriminate use has turned into a burden. Instead of taking the risk and exploring new paths, many authors sponsored by publishing companies conform to following pre-established schemes that guarantee big editions and immediate fame. No, we don't find ourselves in the age of the novel's decline rather in a new age of mannerism, the mannerism of the detective novel, the *novela negra*, the fantastic novel, and the melodramatic novel.

In the face of the plague that genre-novels represent, it's possible to distinguish an artistic mutation in the novel that is beginning to enjoy some real vitality: it is the symbiosis between the novel and the essay. If one can trace the origin of these works to the 18th Century, it was thanks to Thomas Mann, Robert Musi and Hermann Brock that they reached their definitive height. In their shadow a pleiad of writers from all parts of the world have prolonged their teaching, mixing the novel and the essay in various forms; for instance, Sebald, Marías, Magris, Coetzee, Del Paso, Vila-Matas or Pitol. All of them have experimented with different varieties of this mutation, sometimes by means of long essay-like passages in the interior of their novels, sometimes with narrative essays or true hybrids. According to some theories, these complex organisms arose when a single celled prokaryote invaded the body of the other, giving birth to the first multiple celled eukaryote. Perhaps these days the merger of fiction with essay represents the best unexplored road to explore in the novel.

Trans. by Bill Keeth
Source: *Mentiras contagiosas* (35-6)

MI PUEBLO NO ES Maria Emilia Cornejo	**MY PEOPLE ARE NOT** Trans. by Fanny Arango-Keeth
mi pueblo no es	my people are not
un mapa de veinticuatro colores	a map with twenty-four colors
quiero decir	I'd better say
una selva verde	not a green forest
una costa blanca	nor a white coast
una sierra ocre;	nor an ochre highland;
y digo	and I say
mi pueblo no es	my people are not
un mendigo en su banco de oro	a beggar sitting on a bench of gold
ni un paraíso perdido;	nor a paradise lost;
mi pueblo	my people
mi pueblo sufre	my people suffer
y es	and, they are
gente dividida en colores,	people divided in colors,
mendigos y explotadores.	beggars and exploiters.

Faculty News

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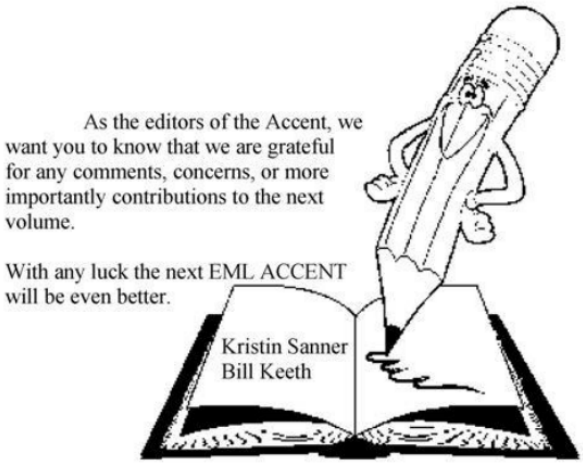
June 2010 (38.2) issue of *Review of American History* and her review of *The Early Joyce and the Writing of* Exiles by Nick De Marco appeared in *James Joyce Quarterly* (46.2).

This semester, **Dr. Sanner** also participated in the Susquehanna County "Big Read" project by serving as a discussion panelist for *The Red Badge of Courage.*

Three of **Dr. Judith Sornberger's** poems were recently published. "Why I Am Not Quite a Buddhist" appeared in *Hawaii Pacific Review,* Vol. 24. You can read "Inside" in the fall/winter 2010—2011 issue of *The Aurorean* and the most recent issue of *Pilgrimage* includes her poem, "Kneeling."


As the editors of the Accent, we want you to know that we are grateful for any comments, concerns, or more importantly contributions to the next volume.
With any luck the next EML ACCENT will be even better.
Kristin Sanner
Bill Keeth